



INVOCATRIX

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Invocatrix

By Wheberson Migueletti
(dedicated to J.S.L.)

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I

In other circumstances, Anna would not have given the story a thing. She and her friend from work Catarina were having lunch at the company's restaurant. Catarina told her about an African who claimed to be able *to bring the beloved one back in a few days*. But now with the loss of her boyfriend to Zenaide, another colleague, she simply listened to Catarina and kept a restrained smile. She was struggling with low self-esteem. Having the mystical power to win back her boyfriend was certainly a tempting idea.

Could she use it as a competitive advantage? She had always been a

competitive young lady. "Competition is in my DNA," she used to say. It was hard for her not to think like that.

She had never enjoyed management positions, for instance. But when a colleague from Economics college became a manager with only a year and a half at the company, she became interested in management jobs. She had been working for three years at there. So she started looking at *countermoves*. First, it was the gossip. She could only get that position for herself if she was able to bring out how dirty that new manager was. Nevertheless that girl was virtuous and had not many faults. But in the end, it wasn't a real problem for Anna's creativity. Second, it was the most powerful one: seduction. Anna was a beautiful woman. Plus, she was born with a sweet eyes and an exquisite smile. Even at her age she had never lost that childish smile of her. When smiling, she looked like a naughty little girl. And when it was a little louder, she always covered her mouth with her hand. A charming adored by everyone. After undermining her rival's reputation, she *was seduced*, so to speak, by her boss. That was a married man. Soon he learned that she was not only interested in carnal pleasures. So if he didn't want to face a ruined reputation, he should grant her some compensation. Her campaign took about 5 weeks. After that she got her management position and her rival was fired. But she worked as a manager for about 6 months only. She later applied for a transfer to her former position in the financial department, indeed a place she enjoyed to work for.

Catarina then opened the African profile on her cell phone and showed it to Anna. As soon as she saw the man's photo, she cheered up. The guy - in his 50s - dressed like those 1980s movie pimps. There were sports cars, jewels and a lot of fancy men's accessories. He exhibited himself in resorts, casinos and 5-star hotels in various locations around the world. Anna could never understand why those so-called fortune-tellers were never rich. Well, if they were indeed able to *bring the loved ones back*, why didn't they bring some fortunes to themselves? That man was different. If he could bring the loved ones back to the customers it was a mystery, but surely he was able to get some money to himself with his spells.

When she got home from work, she went to take a shower. Just an old habit. Later, she opened her laptop and went to visit the fortune-teller's web page.

It was an elegant website. There was relevant information about all services provided. But no contact phone, no address, nor any personal information. He identified himself as 'The Shaman'. The only way to contact him was by a *LIVE CHAT* button at the top of the main page.

Anna clicked that button. Immediately a pop-up window appeared informing her that he was chat with her in a few minutes. She was in the kitchen. So she decided to prepare a snack while waiting.

Ten minutes later, there was a sound notification from the laptop. It was *The Shaman* making his greeting. She introduced herself and asked about the *Bring Your Loved Ones Back* service. Anna got a sick feeling in her stomach when she pressed the *SEND* button. The man almost instantly returned a default text with 6 rituals and their respective prices. There was almost everything there from spells to the moorings with voodoo dolls. There were warnings everywhere about no consumer guarantees and no refunds. Customers should rely on their willpower only. Anna's initial excitement faded away and she ended up really disappointed.

"sorry, i made a mistake," she said.

"wht do u mean, ma'am?" The shaman said it thinking about losing a sale. "our services are offered at affordable prices."

"it's not about that"

"plus, our services are delivered remotely"

For a moment she thought about ending the chat without even saying goodbye. But she continued:

"my friend told me about u. she said i could rely on ur services. but in fact i can't"

"i see. mambo-jambo. this is all about it u think"

"tbh, i do," she defied him.

"and if i tell u about a service that works 100%? how far could u go?"

"srsly? :)"

"have u ever heard about Tor?"

"nope"

He made a brief explanation about it. Tor is a browser used to access the *Deep Web*, a World Wide Web underworld dominated by hackers and all kinds of anonymity. He instructed her how to use it and how to get in touch in the deep web. All their conversation from that moment on would be made there only.

In the deep web, they got into chat again.

"again. how far could u go?" The Shaman asked her.

"don't know"

"let me put this way: do u want to get ur loved one back at all costs, nevermind how?"

"*nevermind how* sounds very dangerous"

"of course"

"well, let me think about it carefully. and how much it would cost me?"

"at first, nothing at all. i'll get paid when you get what you want," he said.

"are u for real? :)) how do u know i'll keep my word?"

"i'll get paid in the same way as our service will work. i'm a believer, ma'am"

He went into details about the ritual. It was based on human sacrifice, as it had been done in certain places in the Andes in the past. He made that discovery during a shamanic trance with psychoactive plants in Peru few years ago. She would kidnap someone, intoxicate that person with a certain beverage, move her or him to the backyard of the house and cover the body with leaves and twigs. Anna would also take a psychoactive drink but from a different composition. When she was in a trance, she would recite an evocation to reanimate the victim.

What would come next would be a so called *Golem*.

"wht happens next?" She asked him.

"just be careful. show that reanimated to ur beloved one only"

"my ex-boyfriend u mean. and then?"

"ur ex-boyfriend won't see the reanimated as it really is, but rather as a person he would like that to be. he'll see an enchanted creature we call Golem," explained The Shaman.

It's a true fact that the human being has an inherent propensity to really do see what he wants to see. The ritual would magnify that. The Golem would show himself to other people - besides the spellcaster - as whom they would really like to see in front of them.

"u must be quick. talk to ur ex-boyfriend. instruct him as u wish"

"that golem will remain quiet all the time?"

"yes. ur golem won't say a thing ever. instead, u'll put words in its mouth"

After persuading her ex-boyfriend, Anna should take the reanimated to the backyard of her house and bury it in shallow grave. Before burying, she should behead it.

"so this is it. do that ritual in order to get ur ex-boyfriend back"

"how much will it cost me?" Anna asked him.

"let's talk later about that"

They agreed to chat in the deep-web only. Anna told him she needed to think calmly about proceeding with the Golem's evocation ritual. He agreed. If she went ahead, he would send her the ingredients of the beverages without any charges.

Anna couldn't sleep properly that night. Killing a human being seemed too much for her. "Except for self-defense," she thought. The only person she would

dare to kill at that moment was Zenaide: "that damned thief."

Next morning Anna was at her desk at work. While reading a document, a group notification from WhatsApp caught her attention. It was the *gossip group*, as they called it. She checked it out. Catarina had posted a photo.

Anna's eyes widened. She zoomed in the photo. Then zoomed it out. Again. And again. She could not believe it. Her eyes gradually became misty.

There was a smiling person in that photo. Zenaide was showing proudly her right hand. She was wearing an engagement ring.

Soon others in the group posted comments about the engagement. Anna wiped away her tears. They were as heavy as a couple of lead pellets.

Two years of dating with Cassio and he had never seriously mentioned the word *marriage* with her. But with Zenaide he had not even completed three months of dating and he was now engaged to her? "No, no!" That was an affront to her. That engagement was an act of defiance intended to demean and humiliate her. Anna could find no other explanation for it. And it came out of Zenaide's mind.

It couldn't be his idea. Anna saw him as a masculine man, but brainpower wasn't part of his gifts. How many times had she easily manipulated him? "Always. Anytime I wanted to."

Yes, that was Zenaide's idea. She was a smart person alright. "And now she is manipulating him like a tiny dog."

Anna was trying to pull herself together. She would not let it lie. "Never! If you wanna war with me, then I'll give you a fucking war, bitch!"

Anna spent a sleepless night. She studied hard the *modus operandis* of several well-known *serial killers*. Because of this, she put completely aside the idea of murdering Zenaide. She would be the main suspect of her disappearance.

As a rule, psychopaths choose not to have any bond with their victims. They prey on prostitutes, beggars, addicts and hitchers. Everyone which would end up as an unreported missing person. She also learned that their preferential victims were thin and small prostitutes. After all, not even a psychopath would be crazy enough to choose a weightlifter as a victim.

At the end of the next day, when she got home from work, she chatted with The Shaman. She decided to proceed with the service. She wouldn't let Zenaide to have her wedding nor her fiancé.

The Shaman appreciated the news and assured her that she would be pleased with the service. Then he posted in the chat the ritual's step by step. He also promised to send her the ingredients of the beverages as soon as possible.

The order arrived two days later. Inside the package there were a sharp bent knife and two medium-sized plastic jars. One pot had a green cap and the other a red one. When she opened the green cap jar, she felt a strong nauseating smell. There were inside it a dehydrated and crushed mixture of mushrooms, cacti, leaves, bark and roots. It was obviously a hallucinogenic compound. There was a poison sign on the red cap pot. Its composition consisted basically of dehydrated flowers. This poisonous compound would be applied to the victim.

II

It took two weeks for Anna to buy the property where she would perform the ritual. She chose naturally something as desolate as possible. The house itself was a wooden cabin and everything was in poor condition. There were many trees around. The land was large enough to hide any activity from her. It was distant about 30 minutes from her ex-boyfriend's house.

Following The Shaman's advice, she would prepare the place in advance. She bought a camp stove and pans to prepare the teas. And also purchased ropes, tow, shovel, hoe, lime, flashlight, camping lantern and kerosene lamps. There were already in the property a wheelbarrow, cupboards, tables and old chairs. She didn't forget to buy a bottle of brandy.

Having the material in hand, she went to choose the place where she would dig the shallow grave. The sacrifice would be performed on a Saturday night.

The night was slightly rainy. Excellent for those who wanted to avoid curious eyes. Anna was in the neighbor city, a more developed town. She was moving slowly and carefully with her car in the prostitution zone. Out there the girls were either under umbrellas or sheltering under decks. She was looking for a fragile one. Obviously, she avoided those who were in a group or very exposed to the car traffic.

Anna was confident about finding the right victim. She just needed perseverance with a good dose of luck. Besides, since she would perform a demonic ritual, it was important to leave everything in the Fate's hands.

She was immersed in her bad thoughts when she received some kind of a divine sign. The rain was over. She was near at one interstate exit. A girl was sitting on a right-angled junction with some marginal road. It seemed she was targeting truck drivers.

And then, Anna entered slowly at the junction, blinking with the headlights to the girl. As soon as she reached the marginal road, she stopped the car. In her rearview mirror she saw the hooker getting up and walking towards her.

The girl who got into the car was hispanic. Possibly she was there illegally coming from some Central America country. She was petite and visibly addicted to crack or meth.

The petite girl, who called herself as Cereza, gladly accepted the handful of pills she was offered. She swallowed it all with a sip of brandy. Anna told her before that they were fancy imported amphetamines. Immediately, Cereza took a joint from her shorts and lit it. Anna also smoked it, disguising empathy. Half an hour later the victim was knocked out.

The first thing she did was to move Cereza inside the cabin. For that, Anna threw her into the wheelbarrow. The way it was, it wasn't necessary to gag her. Anna did, however, as well as tied her to a kitchen chair.

According to the shaman, both hallucinogenic and poisonous tea should be prepared on low heat for ten minutes. Meanwhile Anna sent a WhatsApp's message to her ex-boyfriend. She wanted to confirm the meeting at his house.

Ten minutes later, Anna released the victim and poured the poison through her mouth with the help of a funnel. Soon after, she drank her hallucinogenic tea mixed with orange juice. In the third sip she vomited.

About half an hour later, Cereza began to present tremors accompanied by intense salivation and abdominal contractions. Then it turned into a persistent convulsion.

By this time, Anna was experiencing the first effects of the hallucination. The object colors were highlighted. The table in front of her seemed no longer of wood but of rough stone like an altar. The girl suffering in her chair was an

exotic spectacle. Slowly and gradually the cabin seemed to be converging on the rooms of an Inca temple or something.

At some point in time, the victim stalled abruptly. Her eyes were rolled back. Anna got up and checked it out. She could not diagnose whether the girl was alive or dead. She simply untied her and tossed her into the wheelbarrow.

Back in the yard, she took Cereza out of the wheelbarrow and placed her at the foot of a tree beside the shallow grave. A few meters ahead, through the trees, she could see the yellow light of the kerosene lamp that was illuminating the kitchen of the cabin. The wind was blowing cold, swinging the tops of all those trees. She took the shovel and began to cover the girl with the pile of leaves and sticks she had prepared in advance. After that she calmly returned to the cabin with a camping lantern in her hand.

Anna was feeling omnipotent. She was an Inca shaman on the brink of offering her sacrifice. She took a piece of paper from her jeans, which at that moment looked like an ancient garb and took a look. It was hard to concentrate in the reading but she could remember it well. Then she raised a loud voice in the most imposing tone she could muster:

My heart has been like that.

A temple, a culture garden.

Oh, demons!

Ye who have been dwelling in my temple.

Ye who have been growing in the fertility of my sorrows.

Vade!

Through this human offering I am freeing thee.

Get out of my temple!

Leave from the fecundity of my garden.

For this night only, go away, oh demons!

Seek my enemies' bosom.

From their hates, injustices and perfidies make an unforgettable banquet.

For this night only, oh demons, give them no mercy.

In return for my generosity, send me a mediator, give me a Golem!

And may this mythical creature, unraveled by the bowels of filth, take my words for itself.

And with them it makes music to my beloved one's inebriated ears: a mighty cant of my will.

Due to the effect of the tea, she lost some subjective notion of time. It could have been gone by thirty minutes or just five. And then, she heard a noise from the back. It looked like dry branches were being trampled underfoot.

She felt a sudden paranoia. Was it really the reanimated girl or some psycho on the loose in her backyard? Or it could just be the rattle of the treetops. She took a flashlight and a knife to check it out.

She sneaked out and closed the door carefully, hoping to keep herself on silence. When turning to the porch, she faced a figure about ten feet ahead. Anna aimed the flashlight to it and saw that it was the girl. The reanimated one was with closed eyes, completely still at the end of the back porch. She looked like a sleepwalker.

Anna then approached her and touched her with fingertips, trying to decipher her. The reanimated one was cold. Anna checked her face out with the flashlight. It was a pale yellow. Her eyes were sunken and black-ringed, like raccoon eyes. There were leaves curled up in her hair. Anna removed them and wiped her dusty blouse.

Anna managed to drive to her ex-boyfriend's house. She was with the girl. She

pressed the doorbell and waited.

Moments later she heard the sound of the keys. Cassio opened the door without smiling to her. He wasn't in the mood for fights and didn't want to reconcile with her. "But now we're friends, right?" He thought.

Anna was in a mixture of excitement and anxiety. The face she used to make when she was with surprises. He glanced over her shoulder to see who was behind her. The reanimated - who was crestfallen - lifted her head and opened her eyes, returning his gaze.

Cassio immediately changed his mood. The smile was not enough to express the emotion he was feeling now. As if in a trance, he saw right in front of him his grandfather. His father had died when he was three years old. Since then his grandfather was the only person who had authority over him. It was like that while the old man was alive.

Moved, Cassio went to the Golem and hugged it. He greeted his grandfather as he used to do when he was a teenager. Anna realized that he took the girl by his grandfather. They entered the living room together. Anna followed them in wonder.

Cassio questioned him about his absence, as if didn't know about the long date of his death. Anna quickly intervened. She must take the lead.

That's what she started to do. She assumed an austere tone and scolded him. It was unfair how she had treated her ex-girlfriend, that is, herself. Everything she said, Cassio would hear her grandfather talking. And then she attacked Zenaide, enumerating her main faults, even saying that she did not love him. Cassio - always looking at the Golem - listened as a child taking a serious reprimand. He should break up immediately with his unfaithful bride.

A few minutes later, Anna felt satisfied. Cassio had promised to his *grandfather* that he would obey him - as he had always done - and make up with his ex-girlfriend Anna.

Back at the cabin, Anna moved the reanimate to the shallow grave. She made her lie down in it and also cut the victim's throat from one end to the other with the knife. Then she took the shovel and began to cover the body with dirt, as the shaman had instructed her.

Next night, Anna was already in her own house. Cassio arrived there unannounced. He tried to apologize for the last three months but Anna did not. She wasn't interested in that. "Let bygones be bygones," she said to him. It was time to look into the future. Naturally, he agreed. He said that he had made a mistake about Zenaide and also suspected that she was cheating on him. Anna nodded her head in assent. He also said that he had broke up with Zenaide. Finally he took her hands and wanted to know if they could tie up. Anna said yes, also declaring she still loved him.

About a week after the reconciliation, Anna was dissatisfied with her relationship. Cassio had never been an alcoholic. He drank yes in the weekends or at parties. But now, he was drunk all day long. If it went on like that, coworkers would complain. He could even lose his job.

When she gave him a reprimand, he lied back. He said he drank only one beer. But she knew it wasn't true. It came to her ears that he was drinking whiskey and brandy.

She didn't understand why. She was afraid that he might be missing his ex-girlfriend. He denied it. And every day she asked if he loved her, Anna. And every day he answered yes. Well, if he really loved her, why then that sudden alcoholism?

She had already gone too far to get him back. For her, a relationship must be perfect. It was time to intervene.

It was almost 11:00 PM. Anna was in the next town. Her car parked on a street close to a square frequented by crack users. She was waiting for a lost sheep.

She soon spotted a skinny girl in denim miniskirt and flip flops. She had left a group of friends and was walking out of the square. Anna started the car and followed her. When the girl was already in a more discreet place, Anna stopped the car next to her and shouted, "What's up?" The girl turned to her and answered, "Me, barely!"

Anna went on trying to talk in the way they do. She told her she had some rocks at home but did not know how to smoke them. She was looking for a company. The tweaker girl felt a certain paranoia. That proposal was too good to be true. But she looked carefully at the lady in the car. She was in a miniskirt too, high heels and makeup. She was very hot. When Anna opened the door, the girl came in.

That girl in the passenger had a bad smell. Anna could not breathe right with that stench. The girl, very at ease, was taking generous sips of brandy. Anna told her there were amphetamines in a small bag inside the glove compartment. The girl took two pills. Anna smiled. "It's not enough." The girl immediately picked up a handful of those and hurled at once down her throat.

When she reached the cabin's property, Anna opened the door and stuck her face out. She vomited but only some water came out. She had not eaten anything in the last six hours, since the hallucinogenic tea would make her nauseous. Now that vomit was caused by the tweaker's pestilence.

She took her heels off and put her sneakers on. Then she moved the girl to the backyard using the wheelbarrow.

Anna repeated the whole ritual like before, except for the recitation in which she adapted according to her wishes. She was now coming back to her house. Cassio was there asleep after drinking all day long.

When she arrived, she left the reanimated in the living room and went to wake her boyfriend. Naturally, he did not want to wake up but she insisted. She told him she had a surprise he would like it.

Once again he reconnected with his *grandfather* and was thrilled to see him there in the living room. Anna took the direction of the conversation and dictated a reprimand about the alcoholism. It was a habit of weak people and uncompromising with their future. So, he should quit drinking with all his might. He needed to be far more energetic.

Cassio listened to his *grandfather* for everything Anna said. And he promised to stop drinking and be a more solid person from that moment on.

Anna was pleased with the conversation and went out with the reanimated in order to finish the ritual.

Hours later after returning from work, it was Monday, Anna saw the first changes in her boyfriend. He had not drank a single drop of alcohol. He was behaving the way she had wished: energetic. "A little too much though," she thought.

This whole vigor was accompanied by nervousness. Her boyfriend was irritated by trivial things. He wanted to do a thousand activities in the house. He tried to repair alleged leaks in the pipes. Now was moving furnitures around. As a result, the couple went to sleep about 2:00 am, always arguing for one reason or another.

The following night the agitation continued. This time violence came hand by hand with anxiety. Cassio insisted on changing the laminate to a porcelanato flooring. Anna saw it as the height of absurdity. That house had belonged to her parents and that laminate flooring was entirely her mother's idea. Moreover, she had many installments to pay for the purchase of the property on which the cabin was located. Under no circumstances she would allow such unnecessary expenses. She made it clear to him. His reaction was explosive and unfriendly. Threatened her to leave that house. After all, he had his own and was there spending his nights only to please her.

Anna tried to stop him, holding him by the arm. In return, he tried to pull away but she would not let him go. It was then that he lost his patience and pushed her with all his strength. She fell, banging her head on one of the living room sofa's arms. Fainted right away. Cassio, at the height of his fury, just turned and walked through the door, not caring whether his girlfriend was alive or dead.

Anna regained her senses ten minutes later. She had a bad headache. The incident made her think better about the recent events.

Cassio had never been a violent person. That behavior change could be due to the mighty ritual. She had been careless in her choice of words. She made her mind up to correct her boyfriend as soon as possible. Otherwise, he would end

up killing her in some outbreak of violence.

She had a problem, it was barely in the middle of the week. The ritual required some preparation. She would have to miss work.

Once again she went to seek her victim in the nearby town. She wanted neither a prostitute nor an addict. It would be a hitcher.

It was late afternoon when she spotted a petite girl. She had tattoos on her arms and thighs. She was carrying only a backpack and wearing a blouse, miniskirt and sneakers. The girl was at the exit of a gas station next to an interstate.

Anna stopped the car beside her and asked where she was headed. The girl answered her and Anna told her that luckily she would pass through that city. Since the driver was likable and well-dressed, the girl gladly accepted the ride.

A few minutes away, Anna did as she had done the other times and offered her brandy. The girl refused. She didn't like strong drinks. What about imported amphetamines? The girl said she wasn't into drugs.

Anna concluded that she would have to use violence with that one. She would not have time to look for another girl. As soon as she saw the exit to a plantation she began to shake the wheel. "Oh, no! It looks like we've got a flat tire," she said. The girl cursed.

Immediately they took the exit and parked at the crop field's edge. Anna got out of the car to take a look at the tires. Right back she screamed that the back tire was flat. She opened the trunk, took the lug wrench and made it easy. Then she went to the passenger and asked for her help. Anna said she had an emergency tire inflator that would help them to get to the next gas station. The girl nodded her head in assent and left the car.

In fact she had an emergency kit. She passed the inflator to the girl and asked

her if she knew how to use it. And when the girl got distracted, Anna grabbed the lug wrench and punched her as hard as she could. The girl instantly fell down groggy on the dirt. Anna went to the glove compartment and took the sack of the narcotic pills. She would make her to swallow it by force.

Anna repeated the ritual as before. This time she would instruct her boyfriend more closely. She was heading from the cabin to his house and thinking so bad about choosing the right words. The reanimate was in the passenger seat.

She was so distracted she did not even realize that there was a car accident just ahead. There were one ambulance and three patrol cars. The state troopers were in the middle of the road supervising the traffic.

Anna's first reaction was to stop the car on the roadside and turn around. She gave up. It would be an extremely suspicious maneuver. At that point the best thing to do would be go ahead and see what would happen.

Passing by the men, none of them was paying any attention to her car. Those blue and red lights pounding on her face was accentuating her distress. Everything seemed to be going well when the last state trooper looked fiercely at her car.

The girl at the passenger seat had an appearance of pallor mortis, which is a well-known post-mortem characteristic. It was necessary for him to check it out. The man then signaled the driver to pull over the car.

He approached the window and asked for the license without taking his eyes off the passenger. He seemed hypnotized by her, though her eyes was closed and her head down.

He took the document and went to the front of the car to look at the license plate. Then he went to the passenger's window. Anna lowered the electric glass and the man leaned against the window.

He asked the passenger if she was feeling alright. Then, she lifted her head, opened her eyes and turned to the officer. When their eyes met, he startled. What was his late wife doing there in that car? "Rita?!" said the man in agony.

Anna, who accompanied everything, understood that he was seeing a beloved one. "Hi, dear. Now we're in a hurry. Can we talk on the way back?" Anna said that but the officer heard his wife instead. He promptly obeyed her, as he used to do when she was alive. Then he stepped away from the car, always looking at whom he believed it was his beloved wife.

Anna started the car and left relieved.

Cassio was in the kitchen trying to make some gourmet dish. The place was a completely mess. He never had the patience for cooking, but now he was interested.

Anna, who had been afraid of him since the last incident, didn't say a word about her kitchen. Just told him he had a visitor waiting for him in the living room.

As before, Cassio saw his grandfather instead of the reanimate.

Anna - who stood in the door behind them - was leading the conversation. This time she was choosing her words carefully. She began by congratulating him on keeping away from alcohol. Shortly thereafter she set out for reprimand. He had been confusing energy with aggression. His recent behavior was unacceptable. He should not expose his girlfriend to violence, but treat her with gentleness and affection as he had always done. He needed to be more sensitive and think over his actions on their relationship. He should love her unconditionally. Even if it meant sacrificing himself for her happiness.

Cassio listened with the utmost attention. His grandfather was right. He should repent. From now on he would do his best to see his girlfriend Anna completely happy.

At that point she felt satisfied. After all, what could go wrong? The man promised to move mountains for her.

So she took the Golem by the arm and left the house. She would finish the ritual.

Next morning the recent agitation was gone. Cassio was all caresses and tenderness with Anna. When she left him at work, they were a really passionate couple. She noticed that this time she had been successful in the ritual. Her day would be great at work.

So it was like that the entire week.

It was about 3:00 PM when Anna was contacted. She had just passed by the reception. She was heading toward the emergency room she was informed to go to.

The nurses were wrapping one of Cassio's ankles. Except for some bruises, it was the only sequel after a failed suicide attempt.

At lunchtime at his work he had not gone to lunch. Instead, he went to a room where there were gutters of structured cabling exposed on the ceiling. There was nobody else there at that time. He picked up a cable, climbed up on a table and made a loop in the metallic gutter that seemed firm. Then he tied the other end around his neck. He jumped off the table and hung in the air for a few seconds. Fortunately, the gutter did not resist his weight and collapsed with a huge crash. Some employees in the nearby rooms rushed to the scene, broke into the door and found him on the floor unconscious. A cable was still tied around his neck. They cut that and immediately called an ambulance.

Anna was now in the kitchen. At the table, his laptop showed a chat window. She was making a passionfruit juice hoping it could act as a mood enhancer.

Soon after, the sound notification sounded. She sat down and started chatting with the shaman.

He answered her in an ironic tone. After all, she was not honoring their agreement.

As a matter of fact, Anna did not want to contact that man ever again. But after her boyfriend's suicide attempt, she felt stunned. There were only three more doses of tea left to perform the ritual. She feared that she would spend it in vain. The shaman had not told her everything. He had an ace up his sleeve. It was something she would have done if the places were inverted.

Then she explained to him everything she had done so far. He was not surprised by her failure. There was, however, a final solution. But he was not going to tell her anything until he got paid. Anna tried to dodge saying she had little money. The shaman replied that he would help her by revealing a way to raise capital.

She would have to steal a diamond necklace in a town two hours distant from her. There was a wealthy retiree, named George, who kept that necklace in a safe in his house. He lived by himself there. His neighbor on the front was the brother of his late wife. He also lived alone. They were both mortal enemies.

First, Anna should seduce George's brother-in-law. It would be easy to seduce him because the old man was infamous in town for his parties with prostitutes. Anna should just go with a provocative outfit to his house and ask for advice on where to buy a country estate in the vicinity. The guy was a former real estate broker and knew the area very well. When he looked at her, he would be certainly gladly to help her. She should then apply the ritual on him, expose the reanimated to George and make George to deliver his valuable necklace. When she got the necklace, Anna should leave it on a nightstand next to the old man

bed. The shaman would evidently come by later to collect the necklace. Having the necklace in hand he would reveal the secret for the ritual to succeed with Anna.

Obviously, she did not like it. For three reasons. First, she would have to kill a man for the sake of the shaman and not for herself. Second, she would add a robbery to the list of her crimes. Third, the town where the two old men lived was the town where Zenaide's family lived also. Her rival used to go there every weekend. And since Anna would have to go on a Saturday, she could meet her there, which was a very small town.

She kept that disliking to herself. She wanted a definitive solution to the ritual. So she agreed to the shaman's thievery.

Early the next afternoon Anna had just arrived by car in the town where she was going to steal the necklace. She had already booked a hotel. She was wearing a large sunglasses and a black medium-haired wig. Her natural hair was very long. She parked the car in front of the hotel and then headed to the front desk.

She had not seen that Zenaide was with her mother right in the restaurant across the street. The little town had few hotels and they were all right there in that commercial area. Zenaide was a visitor to that place when she was in town.

Besides, Anna was a pretty woman who got attention wherever she went. As soon as that gorgeous young lady got out of the car, she caught Zenaide's eyes immediately - who was talking to her mother at the restaurant table. Initially she did not recognize her. It was only when Anna crossed the hotel's front door that she did. The shape of her body, her walking and her car. It was Anna, no doubt. But what was she doing there in that wig? "Has she got a lover in town?" Zenaide had to investigate it without a doubt. She did not accept Cassius's reconciliation with Anna at all.

After having lunch with her mother, Zenaide returned to that place but this

time with a car. Around 5:00 PM Anna left the hotel carrying a huge bag. There was not a single man who did not turn his neck to look at her. She was extremely sexy with makeup, lipstick, black wig and sunglasses. Plus, she was wearing a black leather miniskirt, wedge sandals and a low cut blouse.

Zenaide ran to her car as soon as she saw her. "She's going to meet her lover. That's why she's walking here like that."

Anna drove just for a few minutes. The destination was very close to the hotel. Zenaide, who was following her by car, understood quickly whom she was going to meet. In that street lived the richest man in town: George.

Zenaide then parked in the square, where she could have a perfect view of the two old men's houses. And Anna parked her car in front of George's brother-in-law's house.

Anna went to the door and pressed the doorbell. Shortly after, a smiling man in his 65s appeared. She asked if he could give her a few minutes of his attention. He said yes and naturally invited her in.

Anna sat on the living room sofa and crossed her beautiful legs right in front of the man. She started saying that she would move to town to work in a nearby mining company. So she was interested in a real estate. And as she had heard that he knew all about it in the area, she intended to ask him for advice.

The old man, excited by her sensuality, would make that conversation last as long as possible. He was already planning to show her each of the properties around the mining. With that in mind, he told her that he was indeed a real estate expert in that area. He was now retired but he had not lost his know how after several years working in it. She nodded in agreement to everything he said. He would help her with everything she needed at no cost.

Anna, who watched everything in the house, flattered the bar located in a corner of the large living room. There were a huge collection of liquors. Anna

then got up and walked gracefully to the place. When she stopped, she leaned over the small counter in order to expose part of her butt. The old man drooled over the spectacle.

He followed quickly her and stood on the other side of the counter. As if he were a bartender, he began to show off his beloved liquors. With high school air, she asked him to prepare a cocktail for both of them. He promptly agreed.

She had previously smashed some narcotic pills. The powder was stored in a small jar. "That old goat will be very easy to deceive," she remarked. Indeed, he was already eating out of her hands.

As Anna had predicted, it was easy to subdue the old man. She had performed the ritual of evocation as before. In her oversized bag she carried everything she needed: the tea pots, the bent knife, a flashlight and a pair of sneakers.

When she went out side by side with the reanimated, it was already night.

From the square, Zenaide took several pictures with her cell phone the moment she saw them. Those two crossed the street toward George's house. She noted that Anna now was wearing sneakers instead of her wedges. And the old man beside her, who was an acquaintance of her mother, was walking in a weird way. He seemed doped.

When she reached the rich old man's door, Anna rang the doorbell and waited. Then she put the Golem in front of her. As soon as George would look at him, he would simply forget about her presence.

After a few moments, a gentleman in his 65s appeared at the door. He was tall and in relatively good shape. He was well dressed, as if he was about to leave the house.

His expression was serious. It lasted until the reanimated raised his head and opened his eyes toward him. Slowly and gradually it was changing. In the end he

was moved. He saw who in his heart he wanted to see. And such a person was his late wife.

Zenaide, seeing those two enter the house with George, could not resist. She needed to find out what Anna was up to. Then she went around the house and stopped at a window with a view of the interior where they were.

She watched something tenebrous. They were in the living room. The lighting was faint. The brother-in-law and George were sitting in armchairs facing each other. Anna stood behind them. They ignored her completely. The terrifying thing, however, was that she was speaking in a loud voice. Sometimes George would say something to his brother-in-law, whom remained silent and sinisterly static. His gaze was macabre towards George. His eyes were purplish and deep. From what she could see, his skin was a cadaverous pallor.

She just wanted to get away, but she could not. Her curiosity was greater. She turned off her cellphone flash and started taking shots.

Zenaide only left her hiding place when they left for another place inside the house.

Meanwhile Anna led the two old men into the vast backyard of the residence. It was all protected by a long wall. There were a swimming pool, an outbuilding, several ornamental plants and tall trees.

Anna passed by the outbuilding looking for hoe and shovel. Following shaman's suggestion, she should command George to dig the shallow grave.

By now George had given her the diamond necklace, which she proudly wore

on her neck.

George provided a grave at end of the yard. Anna held the flashlight. The resuscitated stood sinisterly beside her. A repulsive figure.

Finishing the work, she instructed George to immediately retire to his room and stay there for the night.

As soon as he left, Anna made the reanimate lie down in the grave. Then she cut the old man's neck with the bent knife. After that, she covered him with dirt and left.

A few minutes later he would return to the victim's house to leave the necklace in the place indicated by the shaman.

Zenaide was stunned. For her, Anna was not a good person, but that was too much. She would confront her. She waited anxiously for her rival in front of the hotel.

Anna arrived about one hour later. All she wanted was a nice hot bath. She had not even noticed when Zenaide approached her.

Although it was no surprise that Zenaide was around, Anna found strange that approach.

"Always surprising us!" Zenaide said sarcastically.

"Hey, good to see you. How's your mother doing?"

"I saw what you did tonight."

Zenaide peered at Anna's facial expression. Had her bluff worked?

Anna hated that lady mortally. She just wished she had the courage to jump on her face to scratch it from one end to the other. With great effort, she tried to dissimulate her rancor.

"Ah, gimme a break! What I did it's none of your business. We talk later, OK? I'm very tired" Anna said while walking toward the hotel.

Zenaide grabbed her by the shoulder.

"No, no! Don't run away. Can you tell me what this means?" Zenaide was showing her the cellphone.

Anna's eyes widened when she saw pictures of her with the reanimate in the street and inside George's house. The ones in the living room were blurred. However, they were clear enough to prove the identity of all participants in that meeting. The reanimated in all of them was a pure aberration.

She felt between indignation and fear. Indignation, due to the boldness of her rival. And fear, because everything for her should be perfect. That lady in front of her held some kind of evidence for her recent activities. "What else did she see?"

Anna's reaction was to take the cellphone from her hands. Zenaide quickly stepped away. She was already waiting for that.

"That's nothing. You slut!"

"Me?! Am I the slut?!"

"Humph! You hit on him.

"That's not true."

"You tried to steal him from me, but you failed!"

In fact, Zenaide only accepted date him when he assured her he had broken up

with his girlfriend. To Anna, it was just a matter of competition. She had a paranoia that everyone envied her and that everyone wanted to steal everything that was hers.

"You're a filthy liar! Do you think I don't know you talk behind my back? I know all about the gossips in that Whatsapp group of yours."

From then on there were more curse exchanges. And then Anna went up against Zenaide with her nails.

Two young men from the front desk heard their noise and came to break up the fight. Zenaide left crying. Anna, also upset, entered the hotel complaining to the men about their lack of security.

The next morning Anna was already at home. She contacted the shaman as soon as she arrived. She was worried about the Zenaide's photos. However, she decided to omit it.

"i did what u asked me to do. now we're even"

"everything worked fine? got the necklace?"

"yes. i left it on the nightstand"

"marvelous!"

"now tell me how i finish the ritual once for all"

"calm down. i'll get the necklace first. we'll talk later. 10:30 is ok for u?"

"yes"

"excellent!"

"look, i exposed myself to steal that necklace. i'm very worried"

"did u do exactly as i suggested?"

"of course"

"relax! those two were enemies for so long. everyone in town knew that. they had plenty of reasons to kill each other"

"what about the necklace? that george is gonna take some measures"

"i doubt. when he smells the stench coming from the backyard, he'll have a filthy surprise. the only measure he's gonna take will be to get rid of the corpse"

"don't know. i'm afraid he's gonna report the stolen necklace"

"i assure u he won't. i know that kind of people. he got rich just because he always knew how to evaluate risks. now he's too old to deal with complications. he'll try to stifle the case, believe me"

Anna felt more relieved with that possibility. They would talk again later.

Anna contacted the shaman at 10:30 pm. He thanked her for the necklace. He agreed to honor his part of the deal.

There was a greater sacrifice without which that kind of ritual could never work. He explained that it was all about a love sacrifice. One side would have to sacrifice its love for the other. Her boyfriend still loved another woman. That was why nothing worked with him. The ultimate solution would be he sacrificing his love for the sake of her happiness.

Anna did not like to imagine Cassio still being in love with Zenaide. But it was an odious possibility.

Even annoyed, she asked for more details. The shaman explained to her that she should perform one more ritual of evocation. With the use of the Golem, she should convince her boyfriend to sacrifice his beloved one with the same ritual.

The difference is that he would not reanimate his beloved one. During the beginning of the effect of the poisonous tea, he should slaughter her immediately and bury her as soon as possible. After that, his heart would be open to love again and Anna would have him all the way she has ever dreamed about.

She was insecure about doing it. He replied that there was no other way. But it was her problem. On his side, the business between them was over. She agreed with him about that and said good-bye.

On the following Thursday Anna was already proceeding with the new ritual. She had thought carefully about it and decided she really wanted to kill Zenaide. She hated her a lot. Plus, there were those dangerous photos.

Anna kidnapped a homeless lady with visible mental problems.

Now she just arrived in the living room of her house with the Golem. Cassio was watching a game. As soon as he looked at the Golem's eye, he began to behave like before. He saw his beloved grandfather, whom he used to obey in everything.

When he heard that he should sacrifice his beloved Zenaide with a diabolic ritual, he went into despair. Unlike the other times, Anna invested a lot of time to perform a brain washing. He cried like a child.

His *grandfather* assured him that a love sacrifice was the only way to grant happiness in his current relationship. If he did not carry that ritual out, there would be a possibility of a new suicide attempt. So his own life was at stake. In the end the Golem's power prevailed and he obeyed. Cassio would perform his own ritual the next night, since Zenaide would travel on Saturday.

Anna took the Golem by the arm and left the house.

III

It was a hot Friday late afternoon. Anna handed the sheet of paper to her boyfriend and said good-bye. She would meet with friends in a bar to form an alibi for Zenaide's disappearance.

She had prepared a step by step on how to perform the ritual. She had also told him the easiest way to bait Zenaide to the cabin.

The plan would be to ask her for help. Everything should be done in the utmost secrecy. He suspected his girlfriend had committed a crime last Saturday. And she would have hidden something in a property acquired a short time ago. Upon hearing this, Zenaide would be interested. She would even show him her compromising photos.

At night, Zenaide and Cassio arrived at the cabin's property. She had immediately offered to help him as soon as she heard his suspicions about his girlfriend. As Anna had also anticipated, he had access to the photos.

Zenaide was worried about her ex-fiancé. He had never been like that with her. He was extremely gloomy and anxious. "Did you set an ambush for me? No, no. She might as well, but he was my fiancé. He wouldn't be able to do such a thing to me." However, she noted that the place was eerily reclusive, perfect for doing such a thing. With a tightness in her heart, she got out of the car. Cassio took the lead with his flashlight. Just ahead was the wooden cabin.

Inside the cabin Cassio lit the kerosene lamp in the living room, then the kitchen's.

Zenaide watched everything closely. She tried to imagine Anna in that place. She was a stuck up person. She was always perfectly presentable whatever the occasion. How could she sneak into a decayed cabin like that? "Everything here is tacky to the max. All her pomp falls through the latrine."

And suddenly she turned to Cassio who was standing at the kitchen door. "Or is it really hers?" It all looked like a psychopath's camp. "No, no. C'mon! I know him." Cassio smiled, the first one from all night. Had he noticed her fear just as would a shark if it could smile?

And then he advanced on her. The scream she gave was drowned out by a sleeper hold.

When Zenaide recovered her senses, she was tied in a chair in the kitchen. Her ex-fiancé was preparing two pots of tea. The smell was nauseating.

As soon as they were ready, Cassio drank a cup and immediately felt the urge to vomit but controlled himself. Under protest, he forced her to drink a cup of tea from the other pot. She tried to vomit but he kept covering her mouth, almost choking her.

Zenaide tried to talk to him but it was in vain. She wanted to know why he was always looking at a sheet of paper. What was its content? Cassio ignored her.

According to the step by step elaborated by his girlfriend, in a few minutes the effect of the tea would occur. It would be a soft hallucination, a kind of trance. In the other hand, Zenaide would feel a strong abdominal pain, vomits and then fall in an epileptic attack. Naturally, he should untie her at that moment.

A few minutes later, he was sweating hard and feeling dizzy. Zenaide could not keep her eyes off of him. She begged to untie her. He was reluctant. He insisted that she should be quiet.

Soon enough he felt a kind of stab in his lower back and fell to his knees. Zenaide already in tears begged to be released. Finally he crawled up to her and untied her.

When she got up to help him he was worse. He began to drool and shudder. In a few seconds he fell into epilepsy.

Cassio was now stretched out on the kitchen floor. He looked like he was in a coma. His skin was a sick pallor.

Zenaide did not have the strength to take him to the car. If she had looked better she would have found the wheelbarrow. But she was feeling strange, kind of drunk. The colors of the objects around were highlighted and her notion of time was altered. Of course, she was experiencing the hallucinogenic effects of tea.

To make it worse, Cassio had disappeared with her cellphone and she could not find his. She was in the dilemma of looking for cellphones or for help with his car.

And then she paid attention to the paper he had read so much. By the beautiful handwriting, it could only have been written by Anna. She knew her ex-fiancé's handwriting, which was a pure scrawl.

Zenaide realized that this was the recipe for some ritual. And apparently Cassio was dumb enough to mistakenly changed the teas. The text talked about resuscitation. Should she try the ritual out to help him? She just did not know what else to do.

Right at the bottom of the paper was a diabolical recitation. Zenaide decided to try it out, reciting aloud exactly as it was written.

A few minutes or seconds later, Zenaide could not tell, Cassio stood up. He was crestfallen and kept his purplish eyes closed. She suddenly remembered George's neighbor.

She tried in vain to talk to him. Though, she told him to sit down and he did, like a pet. She was going to get some water for him but she remembered that liquids should not be given to poison victims. At most she could give him a spoonful of honey.

Zenaide was looking for honey in the cupboard when she heard the approach of a car.

She went to a window and opened it discreetly. Through a small gap, she saw Anna. She felt a sudden fear. Did Anna come to kill her?

Anna hoped her boyfriend would perform the ritual alone. To be on the safe side, the two were constantly exchanging messages on their cellphones. As soon as he stopped texting, she suspected something went wrong.

The Golem kept quiet and sagging in his chair. However, as soon as Anna entered the cabin, he lifted his head and opened his purplish eyes. When she crossed the kitchen's door, she bumped into him.

She looked directly at his eyes. And as it happened in the ritual, she did not see her beloved Cassio anymore, instead she saw the only person she truly obeyed. She just saw herself. Not that Anna she used to see in the mirror. It was a mature version of herself. Her hair was as beautiful as ever. It was only slightly grayer. The most striking difference was her look and smile. That Anna no longer had a sweet and friendly eyes that used to captivate her friends. That version of her were diabolically razor-sharp. And her smile, always praised by all as graciously puerile, in that version was crooked with an air of malice.

Anna liked what she saw. From now on, she would obey her blindly.

Zenaide was still desperately searching for honey. She did not understand Anna's behavior. She was staring at Cassio with a huge delight. But how could she? He was morbidly sick.

Zenaide tried in vain to talk to her. Anna ignored her completely. She waggled her hands in front of Anna's eyes, but she did not even look away from Cassio's eyes, which were startlingly wide-open.

"Is the purpose of that ritual to provoke this trance?" She then took Anna's purse and began to explore it.

There were some print screens of her conversation with the shaman as well as notes of the ritual. Zenaide was astonished about it. There were crimes to get Anna out of circulation for the rest of her life.

She finally understood that the ritual was to evoke a kind of homunculus that would give persuasive power to its evoker. That was why Anna was alienated in that way.

Zenaide, unlike the egocentric Anna, was a good-hearted person. She would never use that kind of means for her own sake. Since the whole thing got at that point, at least she would try to use the enchantment for Anna's own good.

She commanded the Golem to go to the car. He immediately stood up and followed her. Anna did too.

The interior light of the car was on. The Golem was sitting in the passenger

seat. Outside, Anna held a camping lantern and kept gazing at him. Zenaide stood beside her and said:

"Anna, listen carefully. Everybody make mistakes. Not regretting about our injustices is worst than making mistakes. Repent them. Go home and pray. After that, confess your crimes to the authorities. And above all, beg for mercy to God. You're gonna need it."

Anna said nothing. Only nodded her head in solemn agreement.

Zenaide was satisfied, got in the car and left. She would take the reanimated straight to an emergency unit.

Anna, after contemplating the departure of the car, turned and walked toward the cabin.

She went to the kitchen and put the lantern at the cupboard. After that, she pulled out a roll of rope she used to tie her victims and cut a piece with a knife. Then she climbed up on the table and looked at the rustic ceiling.

Anna, as well as having the habit of seeing only what she wanted to see, also used to listen only to what she wanted to hear in her heart. The Golem who had assumed her physical appearance told her something very different from Zenaide. What Anna heard from that demonic entity was:

"All this is not reality, my dear. This is just a dream. A dream that will never end. If you want to leave this dream unscathed and return happily to the arms of your beloved one, then there's only one way out. Go back to that cabin. Once in the kitchen, take a piece of rope, climb on the table, tie one end to the wooden beam and the other at your neck. When you finally feel the rope is tight, then you know what to do in order to return to your love."